

Hobbies

The '90s were a decade of deluge

By Roger Boye

The 1990s are destined to become the most prolific decade for commemorative coinage in U.S. history, thanks to legislation passed in the waning days of the 1992 Congress.

By the turn of the century, Uncle Sam will have produced at least 41 commemorative coin types in 10 years, almost all to raise money for special causes. Fewer than 30 commemorative designs were issued during the 1930s—the previous heyday for such collectibles.

One bill signed by President Bush earlier this month authorizes the government's largest-ever commemorative program—16 different coins to honor the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta. Eight of them will appear in 1995 and eight in 1996, the Olympic centennial year.

Lawmakers approved that program and others despite warnings

in the hobby press that the vast majority of collectors 'won't be able to afford so many new issues.

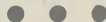
"It takes blind dedication and blank checks to keep pace," said a Coin World editorial. "When a truly historic and meaningful issue is offered, it's difficult to distinguish it from all the rest."

Another bill passed by Congress last month calls for the production of three coin types next year to mark the 50th anniversary of World War II. Profits from coin sales will help pay for a Battle of Normandy memorial in France and a World War II memorial in Washington.

Legislation signed last May also requires the U.S. Mint to make three 1993-dated coins (gold piece, silver dollar and half dollar) to commemorate President James Madison and the Bill of Rights. Surcharges will help support graduate fellowships for high school teachers to study constitutional issues.

In 1995, Uncle Sam will issue

three special coin types to raise money for the preservation of Civil War battlefields.



Canada is unveiling a special quarter design each month in 1992 as part of the country's 125th anniversary of confederation.

The latest circulating quarter honors Nova Scotia by depicting a lighthouse at Peggy's Cove. By year's end, each of Canada's 10 provinces and two territories will have been featured on a different circulating quarter.

The Royal Canadian Mint received 11,003 designs for the 12 quarters in its national competition last year and another 2,871 designs for a "Canada 125" dollar coin.

Meanwhile, the Canadian mint has established a network of coin dealers and branches of the country's Royal Bank that will exchange any commemorative coin at face value for new mint products or for "spending money."